Mr. Erwin Knoll
The Progressive
409 East Main St.
Madison, Wisc. 53703

5/13/88

Dear Erwin Knoll,

As a non-practising, first-generation American Jew whose parents could never bring themselves to even mention the kind of lives they lived in the Ukraine and Bessarabia, I write, after reading the June issue, to ask you to ask yourself if it is not time (I think past time) for you to rethink your policy and publication on Israel and the Arabs, keeping in mind some of your own words in the summary of the "Propaganda Mill" article, "unbiased, objective criteria." And I say this as one who has no use for the Shamirs and their pasts or tear gas of which, you may recall, I was part of a Senate investigation expose. (Including killings and maimings by Federal Laboratories' cannisters.)

Your editorial, "Double-Edged Sword," says of Abu Jihad, "his death diminishes still further the likelihood that (such) negotiations will take place in the near future."

Have you ever thought of, or has the Progressive ever reported, the previous record on negotiations? Among other relevant things I can not remember ever having seen mentioned in the Progressive.

Recently I read what I regard as a fine book by the non-Jewish British historian, Paul Johnson, "A History of the Jews," a current Harper & Row and Quality Book Club paperback. You may not be interested in all of it, although with what you've been publishing I think you should be, and if you are not, I'd like to recommend the last chapter, "Zion," and if you don't want to take time for even that, please begin on page 529 for a recounting of what is the history of "negotiations." If you don't want to take the trouble or spend the money, let me know and I'll copy those pages for you. If you do get interested in what leads to the present awful situation, I think another book I read recently, sent by a Wisconsin professor friend to whom I'd mentioned the Johnson book, "The Bible As History," by the German Werner Keller, has content on the Arab position on Jews going back to Mohammed.

Terrible as what is happening there is, it is peanuts compared with what the Muslims do to each other daily, and you've no interest in reporting that. In four days in Lebanon they killed half as many as have died since last year in Gaza and the West Bank. Forced deportations and deaths are both well into six figures. Have you any notion of the number of Muslims assassinated by Muslims in recent years, particularly currently? Not only Abdullah when he merely spoke to Israelis, nor Sadat who negotiated the Camp David accords. All the PLOs who even spoke to Jews in Europe, all the Abu Nidal gang who decided they didn't want to belong any more. Do you think that any Muslim head of state believes he can survive any agreement of any kind with Israel?

Historically and currently this is a very complicated business, made more complicated by the fact that two peoples can make legitimate claim to the same land and the fact that one people have been obdurate and entirely inflexible. It is by no means as simple as you have presented it.

You really have not informed progressive-minded Americans. You have, in effect, propagandized them. I do not for a minute believe this was your intent.

If you do not want to do the reading I suggest, please ask yourself how secure you would feel if a large part of where you live was only nine miles wide and was surrounded by those who have the intent to kill you, have tried with considerable success, and who possess limitless quantities of the means of doing this provided by wealthy authoritarian states.

Best wishes, Harold Weisberg

HAROLD WEISBERG
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For the mature part of 75 years I've been opposed to violence. Objection to compulsory military training in college and some of my reporting cost me my degree. But I did serve in World War II, without claim to conscientious objection. Nonetheless, I deplore any kind of violence anywhere. Including by Muslims against Muslims.

My last daily reporting, radio copy, included the 1947-8 war when combined Arab powers attacked the new State of Israel. I remember some of it, and as perhaps you do not or are not old enough to remember, what followed when the allied powers turned the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem loose in Berlin, where he'd spent the war helping Hitler.

What he then did is only part of the cause of the present situation. Have you ever thought how the Muslim tyrannies, as they then all were, felt about having a socially conscious Israeli state in their midst and what their fear of word of the condition of people in it prompted them to do.

Please believe me, it is a very complex matter not at all reflected in the Progressive.

Have you ever read what some Progressive people wrote about and from there? I'm sorry I've given all their books I had away.

Harold Weisberg